

COMMENTARY

PORTRAIT OF THE INAUTHENTIC JEW

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IF IT is agreed that man may be defined as a being having freedom within the limits of a situation, then it is easy to see that the exercise of this freedom may be considered as *authentic* or *inauthentic* according to the choices made in the situation. Authenticity, it is almost needless to say, consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate.

There is no doubt that authenticity demands much courage and more than courage. Thus it is not surprising that one finds it so rarely. Most members of the middle class and most Christians are not authentic, in the sense that they refuse to live up to their middle-class or Christian condition fully and that they always conceal certain parts of themselves from themselves. When

"The Situation of the Jew," in last month's COMMENTARY, presented JEAN-PAUL SARTRE's analysis of the social framework within which the Jew must live in Western society. In this second article, M. Sartre examines in greater detail the effect of this situation—in terms of that crucial choice between "authenticity" and "inauthenticity" which, in his view, faces every human being and takes a particular form for the Jew. In the third and last article in this series, to be published next month, M. Sartre deals with the moral implications of the Jewish question for all of Western society. These three articles comprise approximately three-quarters of the book *Réflexions sur la Question Juive*, published in Paris in 1946. The translation is by George J. Becker.

the Communists set down as part of their program "the radicalization of the masses," when Marx explains that the proletarian class *ought to be* conscious of itself, what does that mean if not that the worker, too, is not at first authentic?

And the Jew does not escape this rule: authenticity for him is to live to the full his condition as Jew; inauthenticity is to deny it or to attempt to escape from it. Inauthenticity is no doubt more tempting for him than for other men, because the situation which he has to lay claim to and to live in is quite simply that of a martyr. What the least favored of men ordinarily discover in their situation is a bond of concrete solidarity with other men. The economic condition of the salaried man living in the perspective of revolution, or the condition of the member of a persecuted church, involves in itself a profound unity of material and spiritual interests. But we have shown that the Jews have neither community of interests nor community of beliefs. They do not have the same fatherland; they have no history. The sole tie that binds them is the hostility and disdain of the societies which surround them. Thus the authentic Jew is the one who asserts his claim in the face of the disdain shown toward him.

The situation he wishes fully to understand and live out is, in time of social peace, almost incomprehensible: it is an atmosphere, a subtle sense of faces and of words, a menace that is concealed in things, an abstract bond that unites him to men who in all other respects are very different from

him. Everything conspires actually to show him to his own eyes as a simple Frenchman. For the prosperity of his affairs depends closely upon that of his country, the fate of his sons is linked to peace, to the greatness of France, and the language he speaks and the culture that has been given him permit him to base his calculations and his reasoning on the principles common to the whole nation. He should therefore only have to let himself go in order to forget that he is a Jew, if he did not detect everywhere this almost undetectable poison—the hostile consciousness of others.

What is astonishing is certainly not that there are inauthentic Jews; it is rather that, in proportion, they are fewer than the inauthentic Christians. However, it is by taking advantage of certain aspects of the conduct of inauthentic Jews that the anti-Semite has forged his general mythology of the Jew. What characterizes the inauthentic Jews is that they deal with their situation by running away from it; they have chosen to deny it, or to deny their responsibilities, or to deny their isolation, which appears intolerable to them. That does not necessarily mean that they wish to destroy the concept of the Jew or that they explicitly deny the existence of a Jewish reality. But their gestures, sentiments and acts aim secretly at destroying this reality.

In a word, the inauthentic Jews are men whom other men take for Jews and who have decided to run away from this insupportable situation. The result is that they display various types of behavior not all of which are present at the same time in the same person but each of which may be characterized as an *avenue of flight*. The anti-Semite by collecting and assembling all these distinct and often incompatible avenues of flight has traced out a monstrous portrait which is supposed to be that of the Jew in general; at the same time he explains these free efforts at escape from a painful situation as hereditary traits, engraved on the very body of Israel and, consequently, incapable of modification.

If we wish to see the problem clearly, we must take this portrait apart, restore the autonomy of these "avenues of flight," and present them in their true character as ventures in behavior instead of innate qualities. It must be understood that the descrip-

tion of these avenues of flight is applied solely to the *inauthentic* Jew (the term "inauthentic" implying no moral blame, of course), and that it should be supplemented by a description of authentic Jewishness. Finally, we must grasp the idea that it is the *situation* of the Jew which must under all circumstances serve us as guiding thread. If we understand this method and if we apply it rigorously, perhaps we will be able to substitute for the great Manichean myth about Israel a few truths which, while more fragmentary, are more accurate.

WHAT is the first trait in the anti-Semitic mythology? It is, we are told, that the Jew is a complicated being who passes his time in self-analysis and subtle scheming. We are quick to call him a "splitter of hairs" without even asking ourselves whether this tendency to analysis and introspection is compatible with the sharpness in business and the blind aggressiveness that are also attributed to him. For my part, I recognize that the effort to escape produces in some Jews—for the most part intellectuals—an almost continuously reflective attitude. But again we must understand each other. This reflective behavior is not inherited. It is an avenue of flight, and it is we who force the Jew to flee.

• Stekel, along with several other psychoanalysts, speaks of a "Jewish complex," and many are the Jews who mention their "inferiority complex." I see no harm in using this expression if we understand that this complex has not been received from the outside and that the Jew *creates this complex* when he chooses to live out his situation in an inauthentic manner. He has allowed himself to be persuaded by the anti-Semites; he is the first victim of their propaganda. He admits with them that, *if there is a Jew*, he must have the characteristics with which popular malevolence endows him, and his effort is to constitute himself a martyr, in the proper sense of the term, that is, to prove *in his person* that there are no Jews.

With him anxiety often takes a special form; it becomes a fear of acting or feeling like a Jew. We are familiar with those neurasthenics who are haunted by the fear of killing, of jumping out of a window, of uttering obscene words. Certain Jews are

in some degree comparable to these people, though their anxiety rarely attains a pathological level. They have allowed themselves to be poisoned by the stereotype that others have of them, and they live in fear that their acts will correspond to this stereotype. Repeating a term used earlier, we may say that their conduct is perpetually overdetermined from the inside. Their acts have not only the motives which can be assigned to those of non-Jews—interest, passion, altruism, etc.—but they seek also to distinguish themselves radically from the acts catalogued as “Jewish.” How many Jews are deliberately generous, disinterested, and even magnificent simply *because* the Jew is ordinarily taken to be a man of money? That in no way signifies that they have to struggle against “tendencies” to avarice—there is no reason, *a priori*, for Jews to be more avaricious than Christians—it means rather that their gestures of generosity are poisoned by the decision to be generous. Spontaneity and deliberate choice are here inextricably mixed. The end pursued is to obtain a certain result in the external world and at the same time to prove to oneself, to prove to others, that there is no such thing as Jewish nature.

Thus many inauthentic Jews play at not being Jews. Several Jews have reported to me their curious reaction after the armistice. We know that the role of the Jews in the Resistance was admirable; it was they who formed the principal cadres before the Communists went into action; for four years they gave proof of a courage and a spirit of decision which it is a pleasure to acknowledge. However, certain of them hesitated a great deal before “resisting,” for the Resistance appeared to them so completely in line with Jewish interests that they were reluctant at first to engage in it; they wanted to make sure they were resisting not *as Jews* but *as Frenchmen*. This scrupulousness shows sufficiently the peculiar quality of their deliberations: the Jewish factor intervenes on every occasion and it is impossible for them to make a decision based merely on the pure and simple examination of the facts. In a word, they fall naturally into a state of reflective self-consciousness.

LIKE the timid person, like the scrupulous person, the Jew is not content to act or

think; he sees himself act, he sees himself think. We must remark, however, that Jewish reflectiveness is in itself *practical*, since it does not originate in disinterested curiosity or in the desire for moral conversion. It is not the man but the *Jew* whom the Jews seek to know in themselves through introspection; and they wish to know him *in order to deny him*. With them it is not a question of recognizing certain faults and combating them, but of underlining by their conduct the fact that they do not have those faults. Thus we may explain that particular quality of Jewish irony which exercises itself most often at the expense of the Jew himself and which is a perpetual attempt to see himself from the outside. The Jew, because he knows he is under observation, takes the initiative and attempts to look at himself through the eyes of others. This objectivity toward himself is still another ruse of inauthenticity: while he contemplates himself with the “detachment” of another, he feels himself in effect *detached* from himself; he becomes another person, a pure witness.

However, he knows that this detachment from himself will be effective only if it is ratified by others. That is why one finds in him so often the faculty of assimilation. He absorbs all knowledge with an avidity which is not to be confused with disinterested curiosity. He hopes to become “a man,” nothing but a man, a man like all other men, by taking in all the thoughts of man and acquiring a human point of view of the universe. He cultivates himself in order to destroy the Jew in himself, as if he wished to have applied to him—but in modified form—the phrase of Terence: *Nil humani alienum puto ergo homo sum* (“Nothing human is alien to me; therefore, I am a man”).

At the same time he tries to lose himself in the crowd of Christians. We have seen that the latter have the art and the audacity to pretend before the Jew that they are not *another race*, but purely and simply *men*; if the Jew is fascinated by Christians it is not because of their virtues, which he values little, but because they represent anonymity, humanity without race. If he tries to penetrate the most exclusive circles, it is not because of that boundless ambition with which he is reproached so often—or, rather,

that ambition has only one meaning: the Jew seeks to be recognized as a man by other men. If he wishes to slip in everywhere, it is because he cannot be at rest so long as there remains a single place which resists him and which, by resisting him, makes him a Jew in his own eyes. The principle behind this drive toward assimilation is an excellent one: the Jew is claiming his rights as a Frenchman. Unfortunately the realization of this enterprise rests on an inadequate foundation. He wants people to receive him as "a man," but even in the circles which he has been able to enter, he is received as a Jew. He is the rich or powerful Jew whom it is absolutely necessary to associate with, or the "good" Jew, the exceptional Jew, with whom one associates *in spite of* his race.

The Jew is not unaware of this, but if he admitted to himself that he was received as a Jew his enterprise would lose all meaning and he would become discouraged. He is therefore acting in bad faith: he is concealing the truth from himself, though he knows it in his heart. He conquers a position in his capacity as Jew; he keeps it with the means he has at his disposal, that is, with "Jewish" means, but he considers that each new conquest is a symbol of a higher step in the process of assimilation. It develops automatically that anti-Semitism, which is the almost immediate reaction of the circles he has penetrated, does not long permit him to remain unaware of what he would so much like to ignore. Yet the violence of the anti-Semite has the paradoxical effect of pushing the Jews to the conquest of other milieux and other groups. In short, his ambition is fundamentally a search for security, just as his snobbism—when he is a snob—is an effort to assimilate national values (pictures, books, etc.).

Thus he moves rapidly and brilliantly up through all social levels, but he remains like a hard kernel in the circles which accept him, and his assimilation is as ephemeral as it is brilliant. He is often reproached for this. According to a remark by André Siegfried, the Americans believe that their anti-Semitism originates in the fact that Jewish immigrants, in appearance the first to be assimilated, are still Jews in the second and third generations. This is naturally interpreted as meaning that the Jew does

not sincerely desire to be assimilated and that, behind a feigned adaptability, there is concealed a deliberate and conscious attachment to the traditions of his race. The truth is exactly the contrary: it is because he is never accepted as a man, but always and everywhere as *the Jew* that the Jew is unassimilable.

FROM this situation there results a new paradox: that the inauthentic Jew wants to lose himself in the Christian world and yet he remains fixed in Jewish milieux. Wherever he introduces himself in order to get away from Jewish reality, he senses that he has been accepted as a Jew and is at every moment regarded as a Jew. His life among Christians does not bring him the anonymity he seeks; rather, it is a perpetual tension. In his flight toward mankind he takes with him everywhere the image which haunts him. That is what establishes among all Jews a solidarity which is not one of action or interest, but of situation. What unites them, even more than the sufferings of two thousand years, is the present hostility of Christians. Insist as they may that chance alone has grouped them in the same residential areas, in the same apartment houses, in the same enterprises, there is among them a strong and complex tie which is worth analysis.

In effect, the Jew is to another Jew the only man with whom he can say "we." What they have in common (at least all the inauthentic Jews) is the constant temptation to consider that they "are not like other men," their susceptibility to the opinions of others, and their blind and desperate decision to run away from that temptation. When, therefore, they are by themselves in the intimacy of their apartments, by eliminating the non-Jewish witness they eliminate Jewish reality at the same time. No doubt those Christians who have penetrated these interiors find their inhabitants more Jewish than ever, but that is because they have allowed themselves to relax—which does not mean that they abandon themselves to the enjoyment of their Jewish "nature," as they are often accused of doing, but, on the contrary, that they forget it. What would prove this—if that were necessary—is that very often members of the same family do not perceive the ethnic characteristics of their

relatives (by ethnic characteristics I mean here the biological and hereditary facts which we have accepted as incontestable). I knew a Jewish woman whose son had to make some business trips into Nazi Germany around 1934. This son had the typical characteristics of the French Jew—a hooked nose, protruding ears, etc.—but when we expressed anxiety about what might happen to him during one of his absences, his mother replied: "Oh, I am not worried; he doesn't look like a Jew at all."

Only, by a dialectic proper to the inauthentic Jew, this recourse to interiority, this effort to constitute a Jewish immanence by which each Jew instead of being the witness of others is merged in a collective subjectivity and the Christian is eliminated as an onlooker, this and all such ruses of flight are reduced to nothing by the universal and constant presence of the non-Jew. Even in their most intimate gatherings the Jews could say of the non-Jew what St. John Perse said of the sun: "He is not named but his presence is among us." They cannot ignore the fact that their very propensity to associate together defines them as Jews in the minds of the Christians. And when they emerge in public, their solidarity with their coreligionists marks them as if with a brand. The Jew who encounters another Jew in the drawing room of a Christian is a little like a Frenchman who meets a compatriot abroad. Yet the Frenchman derives pleasure from asserting to the world that he is a Frenchman, whereas the Jew, even if he were the only Israelite in a non-Jewish company, would force himself not to feel that he was a Jew. When there is another Jew with him, he feels himself endangered before the others, and he who a moment before could not even see the ethnic characteristics of his son or his nephew now looks at his coreligionist with the eyes of an anti-Semite, spying out with a mixture of fear and fatalism the objective signs of their common origin.

HE IS so afraid of the discoveries the Christians are going to make that he hastens to give them warning, he becomes himself an anti-Semite by impatience and for the sake of the others. Each Jewish trait he detects is like a dagger thrust, for it seems to him that he finds it in himself, but out

of reach, objective, incurable, and published to the world. It does not greatly matter who *manifests* the Jewish race. The moment it is manifested, all the efforts of the Jew to deny it are in vain.

We know that the enemies of Israel are ready to support their own opinion with the statement that "there is no one more anti-Semitic than the Jew." In actual fact, this anti-Semitism of the Jew is borrowed. It is first of all the painful obsession of finding in his parents, in those near him, the defects which he wishes to reject with all his strength. Stekel, in the case mentioned earlier, reports the following: "In the household and in the education of the children everything must be under the direction [of the Jewish husband]. It is even worse in society. He pursues [the wife] with his eyes and criticizes her to such a degree that she loses countenance. As a young girl, she was proud; everybody admired her distinguished and assured manner. Now she trembles all the time for fear of making a mistake; she fears the criticism that she reads in the eyes of her husband. . . . *At the least mishap, he might reproach her with acting Jewish.*"

One can well imagine this drama between two persons: the husband—critical, almost pedantic, constantly reflective—reproaching his wife for being Jewish because he is frightened to death of appearing that way himself; the woman, crushed by his hostile and pitiless look, feeling that she is mired down in "Jewishness" in spite of herself, feeling, without understanding why, that her every gesture, her every phrase, is off key, and may reveal her origin to all eyes. It is hell for both of them. But we must see, too, that this anti-Semitism of the Jew is an effort to make himself an objective witness and judge, and thus escape liability for the faults ascribed to his "race."

In the same way, there are many who apply a lucid and pitiless severity even to themselves, because this severity produces a doubling of personality by which they escape a sense of guilt through becoming judges. The manifest presence in another of that "Jewish reality" which he refuses to admit in himself helps to create in the inauthentic Jew a mystical and prelogical feeling of his kinship with other Jews. This sentiment is on the whole a recognition of

participation—the Jews “participate” in each other; the life of each is haunted by the lives of others—and this mystical communion becomes all the stronger the more the inauthentic Jew seeks to deny that he is a Jew.

I shall give but one example in support of this statement. We know that prostitutes abroad are frequently French, and it is never pleasant for a Frenchman to encounter a Frenchwoman in a brothel in Germany or in Argentina. However, the Frenchman's sense of his participation in the national reality is of quite different nature from the Jew's sense of participation in his people. France is a *nation*; the patriot can thus consider himself as belonging to a collective reality whose form is expressed by its economic, cultural, and military activity; and if certain secondary aspects are displeasing, he is able to overlook them. That is not the reaction of a Jew who meets a Jewess under similar conditions. In spite of himself, he sees in the humiliating situation of a prostitute the humiliating situation of Israel. I have heard several anecdotes on this subject, but I shall cite only one of them, which I have heard directly from the person to whom it happened. A Jew goes to a house of prostitution, chooses one of the women, and goes upstairs with her. She tells him she is a Jew. He finds himself impotent, and very soon is overcome with an intolerable sense of humiliation that expresses itself in spasms of vomiting. It is not that sexual intercourse with a Jewess is repugnant to him—after all, Jews marry each other; it is rather the sense that he is contributing personally to the humiliation of the Jewish race in the person of the prostitute and, consequently, in his own person. In the last analysis it is *he* who is prostituted, humiliated; it is he and the whole Jewish people.

THUS, no matter what he may do, the inauthentic Jew is possessed by the consciousness of being a Jew. At that very moment when he is forcing himself by his whole conduct to deny the traits ascribed to him, he feels that he can see these traits in others, and thus they return to him indirectly. He seeks and flees his coreligionists; he affirms that he is only one man among others, and like others, yet he feels himself compromised by the demeanor of the first passer-by, if that passer-by is a Jew. He

makes himself an anti-Semite in order to break all his ties with the Jewish community; yet he finds that community again in the depths of his heart, for he experiences in his very flesh the humiliations that the anti-Semites impose upon other Jews. What stamps the inauthentic Jew is precisely this perpetual oscillation between pride and a sense of inferiority, between the voluntary and passionate negation of the traits of his race and the mystic and carnal participation in the Jewish reality.

This painful and ineluctable situation may lead a certain number of them to masochism, for masochism seems to offer a temporary solution, a sort of respite or repose. What obsesses the Jew is that he is responsible for himself, like all men, that he does freely what he considers it good to do, and that, nevertheless, a hostile society always sees his acts stained with the Jewish character. Thus it seems to him that he makes himself a Jew at the very moment he forces himself to flee the Jewish reality; that he is engaged in a struggle in which he is always vanquished and in which he becomes his own enemy; and to the degree that he is conscious of being responsible for himself, it seems to him that he has the crushing responsibility of making himself a Jew before other Jews and before Christians. Through him, in spite of him, the Jewish reality exists.

Now, masochism is the desire to have oneself treated as an object. Humiliated, despised, or simply neglected, the masochist has the joy of seeing himself moved, handled, utilized like a thing. He tries to think of himself as an inanimate thing, and thereby to abdicate his responsibilities. This complete abdication attracts certain Jews, weary of the struggle against their impalpable Jewishness, always disowned and tormented yet always renascent. They fail to see that authenticity manifests itself in revolt, and is not to be achieved merely by the admission that they are Jews; they seek only to be made Jews by the looks, the violence, the disdain of others, by having qualities and a fate *attached* to them—to be Jews as a stone is a stone: thus for a moment they can find relief from that bewitched freedom which does not permit them to escape from their condition, and which seems to exist only in order to impose upon them a responsibility

for what they reject with all their strength.

To be sure, one must recognize that this masochism has other causes as well. In an admirable and cruel passage of *Antigone*, Sophocles writes: "You have too much pride for a person sunk in misfortune." It might be said that one of the essential traits of the Jew is that, in contrast to *Antigone*, an everyday acquaintance with misfortune makes him modest in catastrophe. It is not to be concluded from this, as is often done, that he is arrogant when he succeeds and abject when he fails. It is quite another matter: he has assimilated the curious advice which Greek wisdom gave to the daughter of Oedipus; he has learned that modesty, silence, patience are proper to misfortune, because misfortune is already a sin in the eyes of men. And certainly such wisdom can turn into masochism, into a taste for suffering. But the essential thing is still the temptation to be divested of oneself, and to be marked finally and forever with the nature and the destiny of a Jew, relieved of all responsibility and need to struggle.

Thus the anti-Semitism and the masochism of the inauthentic Jew represent in a sense the two extremes of his possible behavior: in anti-Semitism he denies his race in order to be no more than a pure individual, a man without blemish in the midst of other men; in masochism, he repudiates his liberty as a man in order to escape the sin of being a Jew and in order to seek the repose and passivity of a thing.

BUT the anti-Semite adds a new touch to the portrait: the Jew, he tells us, is an abstract intellectual, a pure reasoner. And we perceive at once that the terms *abstract*, *rationalist*, *intellectual* here take on a pejorative sense; it could not be otherwise, since the anti-Semite lays claim to a concrete and irrational possession of the values of the nation.

But if we recall that rationalism was one of the principal instruments of human liberation, we must refuse to consider it a pure play of abstractions; on the contrary, we must insist on its creative power. In rationalism two centuries—and not the least important—placed all their hope; from rationalism sprang the sciences and their practical application; it was an ideal and a passion; it tried to bring men together by uncovering

for them universal truths on which they could all reach agreement, and in its naive and agreeable optimism it deliberately confounded evil with error. We shall understand nothing about Jewish rationalism if we see it as some kind of abstract taste for disputation, instead of what it is—a youthful and lively love of men.

At the same time, however, it is also an avenue of flight—I may even say, the royal road of flight. Up to this point, we have discussed those Jews who attempt, in their individual personalities, to deny their situation as Jews. But there are others who have chosen to espouse a conception of the world that excludes the very idea of race. No doubt this is really an attempt to conceal from themselves their own situation as Jews; but if they could succeed in persuading themselves and others that the very idea of Jews is contradictory, if they could succeed in establishing their vision of the world in such fashion that they became blind to the reality of Jewishness just as the Daltonian is blind to red or green, could they not then declare in good faith that they are "men among men"?

The rationalism of Jews is a passion—the passion for the universal. If they have chosen this rather than something else, it is in order to fight the particularist conceptions that set them apart. Of all things in the world, reason is the most widely shared; it belongs to everybody and to nobody; it is the same to all. If reason exists, then there is no French truth or German truth; there is no Negro truth or Jewish truth. There is only one Truth, and he is best who wins it. In the face of universal and eternal laws, man himself is universal. There are no more Jews or Poles; there are men who live in Poland, others who are designated as "of Jewish faith" on their family papers, and agreement is always possible among them as soon as discussion bears on the universal.

Recall the portrait of the philosopher that Plato sketches in the *Phaedo*: how the awakening to reason is for him death to the body, to particularities of character; how the disembodied philosopher, pure lover of abstract and universal truth, loses all his individual traits in order to become a universal look of inquiry. It is precisely this sort of disincarnation that certain Jews seek. The best way to feel oneself no longer a Jew is

to reason, for reasoning is valid for all and can be retraced by all. There is not a Jewish way of mathematics; the Jewish mathematician becomes a universal man when he reasons. And the anti-Semite who follows his reasoning becomes his brother, despite his own resistance.

Thus the rationalism to which the Jew adheres so passionately is first of all an exercise of asceticism and of purification, an escape into the universal. The young Jew who feels a taste for brilliant and abstract argument is like the infant who touches his body in order to become acquainted with it: he experiments with and inspects his intoxicating condition as universal man; on a superior level he realizes that accord and assimilation which is denied him on the social level. The choice of rationalism is for him the choice of a human destiny and a human nature. That is why it is at once both true and false that the Jew is "more intelligent than the Christian." We should say rather that he has a taste for pure intelligence, that he loves to exercise it with reference to anything and everything, that the use he makes of it is not thwarted by the innumerable taboos which still affect the Christian, or by a certain type of particularist sensibility which the non-Jew cultivates willingly. And we should add that there is in the Jew a sort of impassioned imperialism of reason: for he wishes not only to convince others that he is right; his goal is to persuade them that there is an absolute and unconditioned value to rationalism. He feels himself to be a missionary of the universal; against the universalism of the Catholic religion, from which he is excluded, he asserts the "catholicity" of the rational, an instrument by which to attain to the truth and establish a spiritual bond among men. It is not by chance that Léon Brunschvicg, a Jewish philosopher, brings together in his writings the progress of reason and the progress of *unification* (unification of ideas, unification of men).

THE anti-Semite reproaches the Jew with "not being creative," with having "a destructive intelligence." This absurd accusation (Spinoza, Proust, Kafka, Darius Milhaud, Chagall, Einstein, Bergson—are they not Jews?) has been given a semblance of truth by the fact that the Jewish intelligence

willingly takes a critical turn. But here again it is not a question of the disposition of cerebral cells but of a choice of weapons. In effect, the Jew finds arrayed against him the irrational powers of tradition, of race, of national destiny, of instinct: it is pretended that these powers have built monuments, a culture, a history—practical values that retain much of the irrationality of their origins and are accessible only to intuition. The defense of the Israelite is to deny intuition as well as the irrational, to make the obscure powers vanish—magic, unreason, everything that cannot be explained on the basis of universal principles, everything that betrays a tendency to the singular and the exceptional. He is distrustful on principle of those totalities which the Christian mind from time to time produces: he *challenges*.

No doubt in this connection one can speak of destruction, but what the Jew wishes to destroy is strictly localized; it is the ensemble of irrational values that present themselves to immediate cognition without proof. The Jew demands proof for everything that his adversary advances, because thus he proves himself. He distrusts intuition because *it is not open to discussion* and because, in consequence, it ends by separating men. If he reasons and disputes with his adversary, it is to establish the unity of intelligence. Before any debate he wishes agreement on the principles with which the disputants start; by means of this preliminary agreement he offers to construct a human order based on the universality of human nature. The perpetual criticism with which he is reproached conceals a naive love for a communion in reason with his adversaries, and the still more naive belief that violence is in no way necessary in human relations. Where the anti-Semite, the fascist, etc., starting out with intuitions that are incommunicable and that he wishes to be incommunicable, must use force in order to impose the illuminations he cannot impart, the inauthentic Jew seeks to dissolve by critical analysis all that may separate men and lead them to violence, since it is he who will be the first victim of that violence.

I am aware that Spinoza, Husserl, and Bergson have made place for intuition in their systems. But the intuition of Spinoza and Husserl is *rational*, which means that it is based on reason, is guaranteed by criti-

cism, and has universal truth as its object. It has no resemblance to the Pascalian subtlety of spirit, and it is this latter—unanswerable, emotional, based on a thousand imperceptible perceptions—which to the Jew seems his worst enemy. As for Bergson, his philosophy offers the curious appearance of an anti-intellectualist doctrine constructed entirely by the most rational and most critical of intelligences. It is through argument that he establishes the existence of pure duration, of philosophic intuition; and that very intuition which discovers duration or life, is itself universal, since anyone may practice it, and it leads toward the universal, since its objects can be named and conceived. I realize that Bergson has his hesitations about using language, but in the end he permits words to serve as guides, as indicators, as half-faithful messengers. Who would ask more of them? And notice how completely at ease he is in argument. Read again the first chapter of the essay on immediate sense data, the classical criticism of psycho-physiological parallelism, the criticism of Broca's theory of aphasia.

In fact, just as it was possible to say with Poincaré that non-Euclidean geometry is a matter of definition and comes into being as soon as it is decided to call a certain type of curve straight—for example, the circumferences that may be traced on the surface of a sphere—so the philosophy of Bergson is a rationalism which exercises the privilege of a special language. Bergson has chosen, in effect, to apply the terms "life," "pure duration," etc., to what earlier philosophers had called "matter," and the comprehension of this matter he has called "intuition." Since that comprehension must be prepared for by research and criticism, since it takes hold of a universal and not of incommunicable particularities, it amounts to the same thing whether we call it irrational intuition or a synthetic function of reason. If—quite properly—we characterize the philosophy of Kierkegaard or of Novalis as irrationalism, then perhaps Bergson's system is a rationalism that has undergone a change of name.

For my part, I see it as the supreme defense of the persecuted: to attack in order to defend oneself, to conquer the irrationalism of the adversary on its own ground—that is, to render it harmless and assimilate it to constructive reason. And, as a matter of fact,

where the irrationalism of a Sorel leads straight to violence, and, in consequence, to anti-Semitism, the irrationalism of Bergson is perfectly harmless and can serve only a universal reconciliation.

THIS universalism, this critical rationalism, is what one normally finds in the democrat. In his abstract liberalism, he affirms that Jews, Chinese, Negroes ought to have the same rights as other members of society, but he demands these rights for them as men, not as concrete and individual products of history. Thus certain Jews look at their own personalities with the eyes of the democrat. Haunted by the specter of violence, by the unassimilated residues of particularist and warrior societies, they dream of a contractual community in which thought itself would be established under form of contract—since it would be a dialogue in which the disputants would agree on principles at the start—and in which the "social contract" would be the sole collective bond. The Jews are the mildest of men, passionately hostile to violence. That obstinate sweetness which they conserve in the midst of the most atrocious persecution, that sense of justice and of reason which they put up as their sole defense against a hostile, brutal, and unjust society, is perhaps the best part of the message they bring to us and the true mark of their greatness.

But the anti-Semite at once seizes on this free effort of the Jew to live in and master his situation; he makes it into a fixed characteristic manifesting the Jew's incapacity to become assimilated. For him, the Jew is no longer a rationalist but a reasoner; his quest is not a positive search for the universal, but proof of his incapacity to take hold of vital racial and national values; the spirit of free criticism on which he bases his hope of defending himself against superstition and myth becomes the satanic spirit of negation, a virus of destruction. Instead of appreciating this spirit as an instrument of self-criticism originating spontaneously in modern society, the anti-Semite sees it as a permanent threat to national ties and French values.

Rather than deny the love of certain Jews for the exercise of reason, it has seemed to me more true and more useful to attempt to explain it.